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RUEHKB/AMEMBASSY BAKU PRIORITY 0028
RUEHBW/AMEMBASSY BELGRADE PRIORITY 0001
RUEHCH/AMEMBASSY CHISINAU PRIORITY 0057
RUEHKV/AMEMBASSY KYIV PRIORITY 0017
RUEHMO/AMEMBASSY MOSCOW PRIORITY 0390
RUEHSF/AMEMBASSY SOFIA PRIORITY 0320
RUEHSI/AMEMBASSY TBILISI PRIORITY 0152
RUEHYE/AMEMBASSY YEREVAN PRIORITY 0092
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SUBJECT: ALBANIAN FM REVIEWS BSEC PRIORITIES

¶1. Albania will serve as organization for Black Sea Economic Cooperation (BSEC) Chairman in Office from May 1 - October

¶31. On May 12 at BSEC headquarters in Istanbul, Albanian Foreign Minister Lulzim Basha addressed representatives of the BSEC member states, observers and related bodies, describing Albania's goals and objectives for the upcoming six months. His presentation focused on three key elements: increasing BSEC's profile on the international stage, implementing on-going reforms, and furthering cooperation with international organizations, particularly the EU and UNDP.

¶2. Basha highlighted the 55 events scheduled to occur during the Albanian presidency, expressing his determination to both maintain on-going efforts as well as create new projects that will bolster the visibility of the organization. Basha noted his goal of increasing the flexibility of BSEC as well as enhancing cooperation at the sectoral level. In addition to reviewing a laundry list of issues on which the Albania chairmanship will work, including transport, energy and tourism, Basha noted that the Black Sea Ring Highway and the Motorways of the Sea projects would be of special focus during the Albanian chairmanship.

¶3. Regarding international organizations, Basha noted Albania's goal of increasing and formalizing the interaction between BSEC and the EU, including through a declaration of relations between the two organizations, to facilitate greater involvement by individual EU member states in BSEC. Basha also briefly made reference to UNDP, encouraging increased cooperation with that organization.

¶4. The only question following Basha's remarks came from the Ukrainian Consul General, who asked whether to expect a meeting of trade ministers focusing on issues including a BSEC free-trade agreement, during the new chairmanship. BSEC Secretary General Chrysanthopoulos noted that past discussions of intra-BSEC trade facilitation measures had not been successful, but that timing now appears to be more favorable. Chrysanthopoulos indicated that ministerial statements by member state trade ministers would add further impetus to the discussion of trade arrangements.

¶5. Consulate General Istanbul will continue to attend BSEC meetings held in Istanbul on subjects of interest to the USG. A complete calendar of events and meetings for the May - October period is posted on the web at <http://www.bsec-organization.org/meetings.asp> x . In general

BSEC meetings unrelated to financial and personnel matters are open to observers; however, meetings described as "ad hoc" or "informal" normally include only member states. During the Albanian presidency we intend to observe the May 19-21 meetings on combating crime, the September 17-19 meeting of senior officials, and the Sept/Oct meetings on environmental protection. The Department and/or Embassy Tirana may wish to consider sending a delegation to the Meeting of the BSEC Ministers of Energy tentatively planned for September/October in Tirana as well as the October 21-22 meeting of senior officials and the October 23 Council of Foreign Ministers. Embassy Bucharest may wish to consider sending an observer to the June 9-13 Regional Conference on Strengthening the Criminal Justice Response to Trafficking in Persons in the Black Sea Region. Embassy Athens may wish to consider participating in the October 8-9 Black Sea Energy Conference.

WIENER